

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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TAGS : EWWT, AEIR, NI

SUBJ : FMG LIFTS CEMTN IMPORTATION BAN AS PORT CONGESTION LESSENS,  
BUT AIR CARGO CONGESTION INCREASES

1. TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER MAGORO HAS ANNOUNCED LIFTING OF BAN ON IMPORTATION OF CEMENT. IMPORTERS OF COMMODITY, HOWEVER, MUST NOW CLEAR INDIVIDUAL INTENDED SHIPMENTS THROUGH THE MIN TRANSPORT. CEMENT IMPORTATION BAN, IMPOSED IN SEPT. 1975, LIFTED IN LIGHT OF OFFICIAL FIGURES WHICH SHOWED ONLY THREE CEMENT-CARRYING VESSELS AMONG THE 96 SHIPS REGISTEED WITH NIGERIA PORTS AUTHORITY (NPA) AS AWAITING BERTHING AT LAGOS/APAPA. SOME OTHER CEMENT-CARRYING SHIPS WHICH CAME IN DEFIANCE OF THE CEMENT BAN ARE KNOWN TO BE WAITING OFF LAGOS, BUT THEIR EXACT NUMBER AND CURRENT FMG POLICY TOWARDS THEM ARE NOT CLEAR.

2. FMG CREDITS DRAMATIC REDUCTION IN SHIP BACKLOG IN RECENT WEEKS TO INCREASED RATES OF CARGO DISCHARGE (17,000 METRIC TONS PER DAY OF ALL KINDS CARGO AS RESULT OF GOOD WEATHER AND IMPROVED PORT EFFICIENCY) AND TEMPORARY USE OF PRIORITY BERTHS FOR NON-CONFERENCE SHIPS. OF THE 96 SHIPS WAITING, 70 ARE CARRYING 294,051 METRIC TONS OF GENERAL CARGO. ABOUT 53 SHIPS EXCLUDING CONFERENCE LINERS ARE WAITING TO DISCHARGE AT THE APAPA WHARF. THREE SHIPS ARE NOW OFFLOADING AT THE LAGOS CUSTOMS WUAY, BUT ONLY ONE MORE SHIP WILL BE ACCEPTED THERE BEFORE THE FACILITY IS CLOSED AND THE SITE USED IN THE LAGOS RING ROAD PROJECT.

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EM A NATIONAL CARGO HANDLING COMPANY (NCHC) HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED AS FIRST STEP TOWARDS AND INTEGRATED PORT CARGO HANDLING SYSTEM IN NIGERIA. THE NEW COMPANY WILL CONSOLIDATE THE STEVEDORING AND SHOR HANDLING FUNCTIONS IN THE PORT AND SHOULD SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE NUMBER OF CONTRACTORS OPERATING THERE. NPA HAS BEEN STUNG IN THE PAST BY WILDCAT STRIKES WHICH CRIPPLE PRODUCTIVITY. NEW NCHC ESTABLISHED AT COST OF DOLS2.4 MILLION AND WILL OPERATE ON COMMERCIAL BASIS AS QUASI-GOVERNMENT BODY. THE COMPANY BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL BE COMPOSED OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT (AS CHAIRMAN), AND PERMSECS OF MINISTRIES FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION, LABOR, AND TRADE, AS WELL AS GENERAL MANAGER OF NIGERIAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINE AND GOVERNMENT INSPECTORS OF SHIPPING.

4. WHILE PORT CONGESTION HAS EASED, AIR CARGO CONGESTION HAS WORSENERD. MAIN PROBLEM STEMS FROM INADEQUATE FACILITIES TO HANDLE SWOLLEN ONRUSH OF AIR CARGO IRONICALLY CAUSED BY IMPORTERS TRYING TO BYPASS MARITIME PORT BOTTLENECKS. PROBLEM FURTHER COMPOUNDED BY CARGOES LEFT IN WAREHOUSE UNCLAIMED BY CONSIGNEES. MR. O.G. OTUIJE, CARGO MANAGER OF NIGERIA AIRWAYS WHICH RUNS ALL CARGO FACILTIES AT LAGOS AIRPORT), ESTIMATES 80-85 PERCENT OF SHIPMENTS IN SHEDS MADE UP OF OVERTIME CARGOS WHICH HAVE OVERSTAYED TIME ALLOWED FOR CLEARANCE PROCEDURES. AIRLINE HAS BEGUN TO TRANSFER SOME OF THESE CARGOS TO CUSTOMS DEPT FOR PUBLIC AUCTION, BUT THIS PROCESS IS SLOW. A LARGE PORTION OF OVERTIME CARGO IS TEXTILE MATERIALS PROHIBITED IN APRIL IMPORT BAN AND SEIZED BY GOVERNMENT; IMPORTERS STILL HOPING TO OBTAIN GOODS. SOME CARGOS LEFT OUT IN RAINS HAVE LOST ALL MARKINGS COMPLICATING THEIR DISPOSITION. BAN ON INCOMING CARGO IMPOSED FOR TEN DAYS IN JULY SOMEWHAT EASED CONGESTION, BUT CARGO LEVELS ARE AGAIN MOUNTING, HINDERING NORMAL CARGO OPERATIONS AND CLEARANCE PROCEDURES. ANOTHER TEMPORARY CARGO BAN IS POSSIBLE.

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